

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 5

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR  
18 February 1987

# Iran-contra probe gets in way of quick OK for new CIA chief

By Peter Osterlund  
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

**A** Senate confirmation of Robert M. Gates as the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency would, under normal circumstances, be fairly routine. But these are not normal circumstances.

Mr. Gates was cross-examined yesterday by members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence about his role in the covert sale of American weapons to Iran and the diversion of profits from those sales to the Iranian contras, as well as the involvement of former CIA Director William Casey and other agency officials.

Gates continued to play down the role of the CIA in the affair, as he had in earlier closed testimony before the committee. But Sen. David Boren (D) of Oklahoma, chairman of the committee, said

that the panel would not act on the nomination until after Feb. 26, when a three-man commission chaired by former Republican US Sen. John Tower of Texas is scheduled to report on its examination of the operations of the National Security Council (NSC). Further hearings might be called "as necessary," Senator Boren said.

Gates has solid credentials. He has held a variety of positions in the agency and with the NSC, and was most recently the No. 2 man in the CIA under Mr. Casey.

But some senators have wondered if they can confirm someone who is one of the subjects of an ongoing investigation.



Robert M. Gates

FILE PHOTO/AP Since his nomination by President Reagan earlier this month, Gates has met with groups of senators and stressed, among other things, the need for close congressional oversight of covert activities.

The effort apparently paid off: He received a friendly reception from panel members of both parties. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D) of Texas echoed remarks of his colleagues when he lauded Gates as a profes-

sional "of the highest order" who understood the "division of power and the checks and balances we have."

But the senators were also looking for formal assurances that Gates would keep the House and Senate intelligence committees, or at the very least a selected group of key congressional figures, fully apprised of the agency's covert actions. In 1984 Casey signed an agreement to keep the committees informed of all covert activities. This pledge was broken in the case of Iranian arms affair after President Reagan ordered him to keep the dealings secret. Gates pledged to abide by the terms of the agreement and said he "probably would have recommended against" the presidential order.

A key question was whether Gates would pledge to resign if President Reagan ordered him to conceal anything from Congress. In the event that a breach of trust between the executive and legislative branches developed, he said, he would "strongly contemplate resignation."